1: Burrows--170-171 (1947-48) Woleaians 1-4
116, 771, 798 Ifalik

"Religion, for the purpose of the following description, will be defined broadly and loosely, as any belief or activity that involves the supernatural. The supernatural, in turn, will be defined as an order of phenomena different from the common run and involving power of a mysterious kind, greater than everyday, well understood kinds of power.

Here and there in the foregoing pages there has already been mention of beliefs and acts that fall within this definition. They could not very well be saved up for a separate chapter, for the people of Ifalik are not inclined, as we are, to seal off religion from the rest of life. Their religion has been particularly evident in the accounts of fishing and navigation, activities which involve risk of failure and consequent disaster. Religion pervades everything they do.

For all the pervasiveness of their religion, the people of Ifalik make a clear distinction between natural and supernatural, or secular and sacred realms. As we shall see, the supernatural has its own personnel and its own geography. The distinction was consistently emphasized by Tom though he did not always draw the boundaries just where we might have done. Whenever anything came up that he regarded as religion, he would label it, 'talk for god.' Except in connection with canoe-building and navigation, he did not profess to understand much about it, and would nearly always consult the chiefs before giving any information. This seems to have been partly due to a special caution about revealing the sacred lore - another sign of a distinction between that and other

information. The people of Ifalik know that on all the islands round about, white men have attacked and, to a greater or less extent, destroyed the native religion. Because they still cherish their old faith, and get reassurance from it where they most need reassurance, they were naturally reluctant to expose it to attack by us or other foreigners.

Early in our stay, I made the mistake of failing to observe this distinction. Because the people seemed so frank and helpful, I decided to begin at the beginning in collecting tales, and asked about the creation. I got nowhere with my questions. They told me that all such matters had been forgotten. They, or rather their fathers, had made the same excuse to Sarfert thirty-eight years before; yet he had obtained some information. I gave them bits of this, following the newspaper man's technique of showing that something is already known, and thus suggesting that they might as well be frank. The chiefs did not remember Sarfert's brief visit, and were rather irritated and suspicious. They wanted to see the German book. But I had no copy, only brief notes I had taken, and fuller excerpts translated by Spiro. They admitted they knew the names of the gods he had recorded, but insisted they knew nothing more about them. At last it dawned on me that it was too early to try for that kind of information, and I asked for other kinds of stories, much to the relief of all concerned.

After the two-day ritual to be described later, I returned to the attack. At that time I was spending half of every day taking song texts; and it seemed appropriate to ask for the songs that formed part of the ritual. The chiefs began to give them, but - if I am

right about what happened - word of this reached Gargeligar, who may be called the native priest, and he objected. At least he spoke with the chiefs, whereupon the word issued 'No more songs.' Without questioning their decision, I made a little speech to them, which was translated by Tom. I thanked them for the songs already given, which would be most valuable; and regretted I could not have more. I added that I approved of what little I had seen of their religion and that, as far as Spiro and I were concerned, we would not try to change it, nor recommend any change to other Americans. [171] Fortunately for the purpose, I meant every word of it. It seemed to make the desired impression, for in a few days the flow of song texts was resumed, and eventually even the other religious ones were forthcoming - with only one exception that I know of. Meanwhile Spiro got around to interviewing Gargeligar. Partly in consultation with the chiefs, he obtained a number of the myths which, when I first inquired, had been ostensibly forgotten.

This chapter is intended to give a more comprehensive and systematic description of the religion than could be derived from the bits that come out in describing other activities. It will begin with what is available about beliefs; then will examine religious behavior. The account is by no means exhaustive. The tales Spiro collected, except for bits that seem essential to this account, will be left to him. Some of the interpretation, of a phychological sort, also belongs to his special problem. For that matter,

it is likely that a number of points, some of which may be quite important, have escaped us both."

"One ritual that was never seen can not be classified for lack of clear understanding of its purpose. It was a specialty of the second-ranking chief, Maroligar, and involved apparatus kept in the men's house, Katēlū. On one of the middle posts, just below the tie-beams or about 6 feet from the floor, hangs a bag of sennit cord, subconical in shape. A slender wooden rod, about 2 feet in length and 1/4 inch in diameter, is threaded in and out across the top of the bag. Below, about a foot from the floor, is a platform approximately 5 feet square with vertical side-boards. The poles that support the corners continue upward to a height of about 4 feet, where they are connected by cross-pieces. These form a kind of rack, on which are hung cloths as offerings. Other offerings--garlands, tobacco--are sometimes left on the platform. The whole suggests a rude Shinto 'god-shelf' and its form decidedly suggests Japanese influence.

[190] Tom, when asked what this apparatus was and how it was used, said that inside the sennit bag are 12 shells of a mollusc called livou ror, that lives under stones by day, and comes out at night. Ordinary specimens of this creature are eaten. A shell that he brought to show what they are like is a flat spiral 2 or 3 inches in diameter and about 3/8 of an inch thick, with an elaborate pattern of brown markings on a white background. Each of the shells in the bag has a name of its own.

From time to time, Tom explained, people bring an offering to Maroligar, and ask him to perform the ritual. He takes down the bag, opens it, lays the shells on a fine pandanus mat, touches each of them with the stick, and names it. The names are known

only to a few, and Tom was either unable or unwilling to reveal them. He gave no more details about the ceremony, but said that after it is performed there is a taboo on work, for the whole population, for four days. Thereafter 'there is plenty of food of all kinds, both sea food and vegetables.' People bring food from all parts of the atoll, and consume it in a communal feast at the men's house. Obviously Tom's description was minimal. The obvious next step, questioning of Maroligar, was postponed, in the hope that we would have an opportunity to see the ritual performed. But this never happened during our stay, and the interview with Maroligar was still pending when the ship returned and took us away. From Tom's description, the ceremony seems to be a form of invocation. Yet the touching and naming of the shells has the look of divination."

1: Burrows--189-190 (1947-48) Woleaians
116, 771 Ifalik

"Plainly these categories [KS: of religious activities on pp. 183-189] are not mutually exclusive. Exorcism of evil spirits is accomplished largely by invocation of beneficent ones. Offerings include invocations. A song may be at the same time a prayer and an incantation. Indeed, religion and magic are so blended throughout that any attempt to separate them would distort the picture.

These forms of worship might be classified in a variety of other ways, but no one basis of classification could be entirely satisfactory. For all its shortcomings, the table above seems to bring out the prevalent pattern."

1: Burrows--200-201 (1947-48) Woleaians
116, 554, 771 Ifalik

"Rank figures less prominently in religion than the other sentiments discussed here. That may be because it is a center of less emotional [201] tension. Yet the opportunity to emphasize it afforded by communal rituals was not lost. The chiefs appointed the time for the ceremonies. During the proceedings they sat together, in a prominent position. When Gargeligar reported the admonitions of the god, he included praise of the chiefs and instructions to obey them."

28: Spiro--4 [4] (1947-48) 1949 Woleaians
116, 177, 771, 757 Ifalik

"In other aspects of culture little acculturation is to be found. Native religion and medicine is intact, despite the introduction of western medicine by the Japanese. The Navy has continued the Japanese policy of holding sick call on its field trips, and of leaving medical supplies with the chiefs. The only item the natives use, however, is cotton, which is used for a head decoration in their dances.

In religion, proper, I found on evidence of borrowing, of whose source, my informant was completely unaware. Arogeligar, the medicine-man, told me what was ostensibly a native creation myth, but which was, unquestionably, the Genesis story. When I asked where he had learned the myth he insisted that his paternal grandmother had taught it to him. Its origin, undoubtedly, is to be traced to missionary influence. Arogeligar, incidentally, was the only person who knew this story. The chiefs, who are the repositors of the folklore, were ignorant of it."

28: Spiro--45 (1947-48) 1949 Woleaians
116, 771 Ifalik

"Ifaluk religion cannot be considered apart from the culture of which it is an integral part without doing violence to both the religion and the culture. The fact that our society is unique in consigning religion to a separate category--one among a number of aspects of culture--has been pointed out by numerous authors, and has become commonplace in our thinking. Yet it is necessary to stress this point in a discussion of Ifaluk religion because the inter-relationship between religion and the entire culture is so inextricable that the natives have no term for religion. Religion is not something apart, a special realm of being to be distinguished from mundane, everyday existence. On the contrary, religion is part of the entire culturally constituted world of the natives, in which dichotomies of natural-supernatural, material-spiritual, etc., which are an intergral feature of western thinking, play no role."

28: Spiro--45 [2]
116, 771, 753, 261

(1947-48) 1949

Woleaians
Ifalik

"The disproportionate length of this section results from the disproportionate emphasis placed on these matters in the culture and in the minds and behavior of the people. Food and health (or illness, to look at its adverse), are the two foci, to employ a concept of Herskovits, of this culture and the subjects with which we identify the term religion, are inextricably interrelated in Ifaluk with health and disease."

28: Spiro--64-65 (1947-48) 1949 Woleaians-1-2
116, 755, 771, 787, 177 Ifalik

"This association of religion and medicine is found not only in the healing of individuals but also in the group or public ceremonies and rituals. The public ceremonies are all medicine ceremonies, in which medicine is made and consumed immediately as a prophylactic against future illness, and in which the alusemar are invoked to protect the people from illness. Though other Alus are involved, it is Tilitr that plays the important role in these ceremonies. Tilitr is difficult to conceptualize in terms of our two categories of alusemar, for he is really intermediate in rank between them, being neither in the pantheon, nor having ever been mortal. He lives in Fatuma, with the royal family of alus, but descends to Ifaluk frequently, particularly at the public ceremonies when he is invoked, and then returns to Aluelap to report to him. Tilitr, as has already

been indicated, is the patron saint of Ifaluk, protecting them from evil and from illness. (27)" [65]

"27. Tilitr predicted an American victory in the war. The natives, of course, knew of the war because of the airplanes which flew over-head, because the Japanese had told them of the war, and because Ifaluk young men had been on Yap during the American bombardment of the island. During the war Tilitr had told Arogeligar that the Americans would win, and that he (Tilitr) would assist them. He also had told him that the Americans were a fine people, that they had 'very fine head, very fine stomach,' and that the Ifaluk head and stomach were small, by comparison."

41: Bates & Abbott N-5 (1953) 1958
OR21 Woleai OR21
Ifaluk

778 Katelu where Maur's spirit lingered; there was a tiny, thatched "god house" in the Valul household area on Falalap; and an immaculate, sanded circular altar as part of the Weluar household area. We called [193] Arueligar the "high priest" because he had the highest ecclesiastical authority on the island, officiating at the few religious ceremonies we observed. Husky, handsome Truesal was his designated successor.

121 Ted, both in 1948 and in 1953, devoted much time to collecting notes [108] on religious beliefs. He felt that these beliefs were steadily weakening, 776 that he could notice a difference in this respect between his 1948 and 1953 visits. The gods, however, were still with us in 1953; alus, spirits, who haunted certain places, governed various natural events, and interfered for good or evil in the affairs of men. Ted collected a list of nine high gods, and of dozens of lesser spirits. He found, for instance, [502] twenty-seven different alus concerned with different matters in con- [396] nection with navigation and canoe building—though these, to be sure, are basic activities, much subject to divine guidance in any maritime culture.

771 My impression, however, based mostly on Ted's writings, notes and comments, is that the Ifalukians were far from having an organized theology. The accounts of divine affairs that Ted got from Arueligar and from the chiefs did not always agree; and most people apparently gave little thought to such matters, leaving them to the chiefs and the specialists. The alus were present, all right, but accepted as a part of the natural order of things: the spirits that every folk find in the world around them.

775 The vast majority of the alus were spirits of the dead. No one died 761 while I was on Ifaluk, but Ted and Mel Spiro observed four deaths 755 during their 1948 stay. They have described these in their book on Ifaluk: the intense preoccupation on the part of friends and relatives with trying to save a seriously ill person by every natural or supernatural means, the nightly wailing chants, the great seriousness surrounding possible death, and the abrupt relaxation of this seriousness once death has occurred, once the alus has left the body. They ascribe this attitude to the firm belief in the continuity of the soul.

764 The body of the dead, however, is given ceremonial treatment: the face is painted red, a new loin-cloth or skirt is put on, and then the